



THE PRINCIPLES OF TRAINING FOR HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION



BY
ARTHUR PERCIVAL NEWTON,
M.A., D.Lit., B.Sc., F.S.A.,

Rhodes Professor of Imperial History in the University of London
Fellow of King's College, London.



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PREFATORY NOTE

The lectures that are here collected were delivered in the University of Calcutta in March, 1929, with the modest and severely practical aim of setting forth some of the hints derived from experience that I had found to be of interest to London students who were beginning historical investigation. It is in the hope that they may be of practical use to other newcomers in the same field that I have acceded to the suggestion of the University that they should be published.

A. P. N.

INSTITUTE OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH,
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THE PRINCIPLES OF TRAINING FOR HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION

I. INTRODUCTION. THE TRAINING FOR RESEARCH.

Of all the subjects in the Arts curricula of British universities none has seen a more rapid or interesting development within the last ten years than has Modern History. Whereas before the war by far the larger proportion of those who took History Honours were contented with the first degree (B.A.) and very few proceeded on to research work, or took up any sort of post-graduate study, to-day in some of the greater English universities there has been a noticeable change and it is proceeding at a gradually accelerating pace. In London the foundation of the Institute of Historical Research and the growth of its seminars have been noteworthy indications of the new movement. In Oxford the work of members of the seminars of Sir Charles Firth and the late Professor Vinogradoff has been of considerable and acknowledged value, while the post-graduate work of Professor Tout's pupils has made the History school of the University of Manchester one of the best-known sources of new knowledge of medieval history in the world.

Encouragement to the growth of the movement has come mainly from within the ranks of those



who are concerned with the training of teachers. Educational authorities are finding that a teacher who has had some training in exact methods of investigation and knows some of the difficulties of handling the raw materials of history and the necessarily tentative results obtained, will have or be likely to have a much more inspiring influence over his pupils in school or college than one who has merely acquired his knowledge ready-made from the pages of secondary authorities. The first sees his subject as a reality and ought to be able to impart to others something of the spirit of the living past; the second too often can only coach for examinations in a set of dogmas. He tends to repeat a series of dull and uninspiring "facts" or to regard history merely as a subsidiary branch of polite literature, suited to be an educational subject solely to train students to express a few traditional views in an appropriate literary form and history thus becomes merely a handmaid of the teacher of English Composition. In English schools there has sprung up a growing demand for specialist teachers who know something of their subjects from the inside and are not the mere slaves of text-books, and thus there has arisen an increasing desire among those who have graduated with good degrees in Modern History for post-graduate training in the methods of historical investigation. In the United States, following German precedents, this demand has long been of considerable proportions, and it is gradually growing in the Dominions of the British Em-



pire. But the provision to satisfy it has until recent years been comparatively scanty in the universities of the English-speaking world, and students who wanted to find opportunities for post-graduate training had to go to Germany to work in the seminars of teachers like Oncken, Meyer or Delbrück, or to France to study in the technical classes of the *Ecole des Chartes*. During the years since the war, however, something has been done to remove this reproach, and students are now coming in rapidly increasing numbers from all parts of the world to work in the history seminars of certain English universities.

Before entering upon our main theme it may be well to explain briefly what is meant in the following pages by this much abused term *seminar*, though we must wait till somewhat later to shew where the term originated and how it has come to acquire the sense in which it is here used.

A Master of some reputation for his researches in a particular field of history and for his stimulation as a teacher gathers round him a small group of disciples interested in the particular type of investigation in which he is engaged. As the Master carries on his researches, a variety of lesser problems suggest themselves for solution; they are associated with the main subject of enquiry, but are not essential to its successful prosecution. The disciples are stimulated to take up these subsidiary investigations and in doing so they are at one and the same time being trained by contact with a



scholar of experience and are making contributions of their own to the common stock of knowledge. As time goes on, the amount of fresh light cast upon the general subject by these associated enquiries may become considerable and arouse the ambition of others to contribute. These ambitions are especially likely to be aroused among the best students who come under the influence of the Master as undergraduates and without such a source the seminar is only likely to grow very slowly. With it the flow of new aspirants is assured, and the seminar will have a continuing life.

A *Seminar* (i.e., a bed in which to sow the seeds of intellectual effort) is thus, in short, a group of disciples gathered round a Master and inspired by him to research in a common field of enquiry.

The seminar is essentially a group of investigators of varying experience and ability; it is not a particular tutorial class or series of classes, as is sometimes wrongly supposed. Every Master will have his own methods of inspiring or guiding his pupils in their researches, and these methods will probably change from time to time, but none of them are essential to the existence of the seminar. So long as the Master is capable of inspiring his disciples to worthy research and of attracting new aspirants, his seminar will continue to live, whatever methods of training he may adopt. The subjects of research will necessarily be continually changing as more and more contributions to knowledge are made, but the general field of enquiry



remains the same; the seminar persists and may even continue to do so after the Master retires if he is succeeded by one of the disciples he has trained.

In the long process of building up such a seminar it has fallen to me to consider what were the principles upon which I and my pupils were working, to ask myself whether students could really be trained to do research of any value, or whether the oft-repeated assertion of some English historians of the older generation were not correct—that historians are born and not made, that if a student wishes to write history, he must train himself, and that there is nothing in common between the historical art and Natural Science. There it has long been admitted that training in research has some value, and evidence of such training has been expected of those desirous of entering the higher ranks of the teaching profession, but in the eyes of these scholars history is quite different, and organised training is a pretentious sham.

“Would it not be better and more educative,” they ask, “to leave our best and most enterprising pupils to escape from their leading-strings immediately after taking their first degree and to flounder into research by themselves if they wanted to, as we had had to do in the beginning? Of course, they will waste endless time and make innumerable false starts as we did, but does this justify us in incurring the expense and trouble of setting up an elaborate training apparatus if such floundering is essential to preserve a man’s originality and



initiative? Can men learn from the experience of others or must they find out everything for themselves? "

These are no mere rhetorical questions, for the views that prompt them have been seriously expressed in public by well-known university dons on many occasions and their dogmatic pronouncements have undoubtedly hampered the efforts of those who think otherwise. But we must not overlook the fact that there is some corroborative evidence of greater weight in favour of the views they hold that is based on surer ground than mere prejudice. Some historians of high authority have taught themselves their trade and firmly maintain that that is the only way to scholarship. In their view the practice of history is an art, and there is nothing in common between it and the organised methods of science; an artist must find his own salvation and after his preliminary training up to the first degree it is best to leave the aspirant to historical scholarship to his own devices. Such has long been the practice with those who present fellowship theses in the older English universities.

To find a satisfactory new answer to the questions is not easy, for it can only be derived from experience, and this experience has not been common among English historians. But the greatest German historians of the nineteenth century and many eminent Frenchmen were in no doubt at all about the matter, and their answer was diametrically opposed to that of the prejudiced classicists.



Mommsen and Ranke, Bémont and Lavissee and all the other great teachers of history on the Continent in the latter part of the century were firm believers in historical training for research, and their seminars and those of their pupils have been the nurseries in which generations of historians of note have been reared. But Englishmen are little prone to decide educational questions by foreign experience, and those responsible for the progress of a university in the British Empire feel more confidence if they have English precedents to guide them. It is in the hope that a summary of several years' experience in an attempt to promote post-graduate study in one department of the Faculty of Arts may be of some interest that I am venturing to give my own replies to the questions propounded above. I have been endeavouring to further the study of the history of the British Empire in the University of London and to build up a seminar in that subject, and I will try to say something of the methods of training that I have found useful to students after repeated experiments. I may say at once that I am a convinced believer in the value of post-graduate training for research in Imperial History; I feel that my students have benefited by it and it is to justify my belief that I now proceed.

Definite criteria by which to test the success of one's teaching are, of course, entirely lacking, and one can only hope to get a general impression of results by comparing the work done and the influence exercised by those who have been members



of the seminar with that of one's pupils who have left the university with the first degree. Perhaps the best answer to the question whether one's experiments have been worth while can be found by noting whether one's colleagues in other subjects are willing to devote university money for their continuance, by the evidence of past pupils as to the influence upon their later work of the methods learned, and by the survival or decline of the seminar in which the methods are worked out.

Before we can profitably enter into details about those methods it is necessary to describe in outline the preliminary requirements for students desirous of entering the seminar. We must therefore say something of the curricula for B.A. Honours in History, for the attainment of this standard is an almost invariable pre-requisite in English universities before allowing students to take up post-graduate work in the subject. This will explain something of the equipment of the students with whom we work and the deficiencies in their knowledge that must be supplied. In the University of London we make the invariable demand that those wishing to enter a seminar and become candidates for a higher degree in History shall have attained Second Class Honours in the subject either in our own university or another with similar standards. If they have not done so, they must take a preliminary course and satisfy the examiners that they have reached the required standard at the next B.A. Examination. It is to



explain what this standard implies that I turn to shew in outline how our curriculum has been built up.

II. THE B.A. CURRICULUM IN HISTORY.

In all ages and in most literatures men have been attracted more to the writing of history than to any other literary task save those of the poet or moralist. They have aspired to tell the stories of past heroes of their tribe or nation, to paint for posterity the glorious achievements of their times or to bewail their miseries or decline. History, too, from its simplest form of annals or the most elaborate and philosophic attempts at interpretation has attracted more readers than other branches of knowledge because most men are curious to know whence they have come and where lie the roots of the problems that they are called upon to face as citizens. Yet it is barely sixty years since Modern History has come to be an important part of the curriculum in English universities. It was not until 1872 that Modern History became a degree subject at Oxford; the Historical Tripos was not founded at Cambridge until 1875, and not until the very end of the nineteenth century was it possible to obtain an Honours degree in History in the University of London. What was the cause of this



delay in placing our subject in a foremost position in the university curricula alongside subjects like Mathematics and Philosophy? It is probably to be sought in two directions.

The idea long persisted, and it is not even yet entirely abandoned, that the only true road to learning lies through the masterpieces of the classical literature of Greece and Rome and in the study of their texts as models of grammar and rhetoric. Many of those masterpieces were the works of historians, and it was felt that if it were necessary to impart to students any lessons in the historical art they could derive them better from the great models of antiquity than by wasting their time in studying the productions of writers who might pretend to be historians, but seemed to the classicists little better than propagandists for rival political parties. The second reason for the neglect of history in the university curriculum was that until the middle of the nineteenth century there were very few professional historians as there were professional mathematicians and chemists and the writing of modern history in English was mostly left to be the work of gifted amateurs like James Anthony Froude or to be the text for the sermons and imaginative word painting of moralists like Thomas Carlyle.

With the appointment of William Stubbs to the Chair of Modern History at Oxford in 1866 a new era opened. He was the first trained historian to fill the professorship, and his influence on subsequent historical teaching in England and those uni-



versities that follow English precedents has been profound. Save from the works of the great historians like Niebuhr and Mommsen who were working out a scientific historical technique in Germany, Stubbs had trained himself, but like them he found his interest not in personalities but in institutions. He maintained that the history of a people can be firmly based in reality only by a study of its institutions and that can only be carried on by investigating the written records that they have left behind them. He fitted himself to study the records of medieval England by acquiring an elaborate technical equipment such as few English historians have possessed. He was an expert palaeographer and an accomplished student of medieval official Latin, the language of his documents. Where others had written their histories by paraphrasing a few chroniclers, he went back to see what the men of the middle ages had said for themselves as they were carrying on their work of government. In his epoch-making *Constitutional History*, he shewed that the most exact and refined methods of scholarship could be as profitably applied to the materials of his chosen period as to the works of classical antiquity. In his *Select Charters*, first published in 1870, he provided a collection of materials on which university students could be trained in accurate habits of thought and disciplined in sound historical methods. Those methods could be as free from partisan bias as the methods of the investigators of natural phenomena which under the lead of the



great teachers Tyndall and Huxley were just at the same period being used in the training of university students. Under Stubbs' teaching English mediæval history became the training ground in which generations of students have learned how our national life came into being with a sense of reality such as could never have been acquired save from the documents. He saved history, too, from its narrowly political and military bias and in his reconstruction of the main lines of constitutional development he shewed how the threads of Church and State, administration, law, justice and finance must be sought in the records they have left and how the nation's story as a whole must be told by weaving all these threads together.

While Stubbs was accomplishing those twenty years' tenure of the Regius Professorship that fixed a training in Constitutional History as the central core of all English historical curricula, a scholar of equal ability but lesser eminence was applying similarly exact and patient methods to a widely different period of our history. For forty years Samuel Rawson Gardiner devoted his life to an exhaustive investigation of the records of the first half of the seventeenth century in order to discover the truth concerning events that had been veiled in clouds of controversy and bitterness for two centuries. He put aside the secondary works that had been written about those controversies and went back to the originals to find what the actors in the struggle had to say for themselves. For the first time all the im-



mense mass of extant evidence was considered as a whole by an impartial and tolerant judge, and the men of the seventeenth century, Puritans and Anglicans, Roundheads and Cavaliers, appeared not as high-flown actors in a costume drama, but real men and women grappling with the difficulties of their time in much the same way and with similarly mixed results to those of to-day. What Stubbs had proved for the middle ages Gardiner shewed true for the Stuart period—that if historians would handle their materials in the same cool temper and with similar criteria to those employed by a physicist or chemist in dealing with natural phenomena, a real process of development could be traced in national affairs, and modern history becomes a scientific study whose broad results command general assent.

Stubbs and Gardiner were the foremost exponents of the new method in English history, but their work was only a part of the product of the great renaissance of historical literature in England. Freeman, Creighton, Lecky, Seeley and many lesser men between 1860 and 1900 succeeded in building on firm foundations a story of English development that had profound influence on the intellectual life of the nation, but it may be doubted whether the results of their researches would have become familiar to the ordinary reader if it had not been for the contributions of a writer of a different sort. John Richard Green cannot be accounted one of the line of scientific historians, but it is im-



possible to explain the growth of historical studies in our universities without referring to his influence. He was a populariser of the best sort who, taking the results of the investigators, wove them into a fascinating story of national growth such as had never before been written. Green's *Short History of the English People* was first published in 1874 and it had an instantaneous success. It was read by everyone, and for the first time it became possible for the 'man in the street' to see his national life whole. Through the bewildering maze of facts Green drove a clear, open path, so that the nation could be realised as a living organism, and the old phrases about the "body politic" acquired for most intelligent men a real meaning such as they never had had before. Within the compass of a comparatively short and eminently readable book the whole story of our island people from Julius Cæsar to Waterloo was told with a graphic and arresting vigour and charm that made England live on the printed page as never before. Within Green's broad outlines lesser men might fill in the details of the picture from the monographs of the scientific investigators and yet retain them in proper relation to the whole. For the first time it became possible to make English History a part of the school or university curriculum as a living subject utterly different from the dull lists of facts and dates that had made up its content before. From an unimportant annex to the curriculum history was raised within twenty years to



be an essential subject of education, and the Modern History Schools of the universities steadily increased in popularity.

Probably only one book has approached Green's *Short History* in influence on the teaching of history and on political thought. This was Seeley's *Expansion of England*, the work of one who was both a scientific historian and a brilliant essayist. Something of what Green had done for English history, Seeley did for the British Empire. He shewed that the living organism of the British peoples having attained unity those peoples spread out oversea to plant the roots of new English-speaking communities in distant lands. But, whereas Green could base his work securely on the results of many patient scientific investigators, Seeley found that nothing had been attempted in the field of Imperial history, and his work could be nothing more than a brilliant suggestion of the existence of unexplored territories awaiting the search of the historian. It could make little direct addition to the contents of the curricula and its importance lay chiefly in its influence on political thought.

Between 1874 and 1914 the requirements for the Honours examinations in History in our universities varied little. All our students were required to do the greater part of their work in the political and constitutional history of England, and the history of other European nations was studied only in relation to our own. The his-



tory of other parts of the world was almost wholly neglected. The fact is that while an admirably educative course in English history for undergraduates was built upon the work of the great investigators as it was known about the middle of the 'eighties, but little encouragement was given to others to follow them up or to apply their scientific methods in other fields.

At the same period a somewhat similar situation existed in the new science of Political Economy that we include now-a-days under the term Economics. A mass of economic doctrine had been formulated by the writers of the mid-nineteenth century who followed the lead of Adam Smith and students were encouraged to assume that they were fully equipped economists when they had familiarised themselves with these doctrines. Those who desired to continue their work beyond their undergraduate course were expected to expound the accepted theories of the Masters rather than to undertake fresh historical enquiries for themselves. It was in the borderland between History and Economics that a new forward movement took its rise at the end of the nineteenth century. Two great Cambridge teachers, F. W. Maitland and William Cunningham, began to apply strict methods of historical research to the field of social and economic history—Maitland to that of English law and custom, Cunningham to that of industry and commerce. Each gathered round him a devoted band of disciples who could carry on his work. After



Maitland's early death his pupils mostly went off to work in the general field of medieval institutional history, but Cunningham founded a lasting school of investigators who have made immense contributions to their increasingly important subject. It was on this side that the most active forward movement in historical training took its rise, and it derived an additional impetus from the concurrent development of training in Natural Science in the English universities.

Almost ever since the foundation of Faculties of Science in England the value of a teacher to his university has been judged less by the success of his candidates in the examinations for the first degree or by the facility with which he could expound a mass of accepted doctrine than by the contributions that he and his pupils could make to the extension of knowledge. To use the common phrase, he and his pupils were judged by their output of valuable 'original work,' and gradually a similar criterion began to be applied in the Faculty of Arts where it had too long been lacking. In certain universities, and notably Manchester and London, new consideration was given to the contents of the curriculum to make it afford suitable training for those who might later on wish to undertake research. The war gave rise to a demand for a much wider study of the history of the European nations and of world history in general; economic and social history were introduced as parts of the ordinary course, and there was an insistent demand for more opportunities for the



study of recent history and especially of the period since 1870 which had filled only a small space in our history text-books. The rise of the new nations of the British Empire could no longer be slurred over and neglected and there arose a new interest in our Imperial development in India and the Dominions such as was unknown earlier.

The history curriculum of the University of London was, perhaps, more drastically affected by these post-war movements than that of any other British university, and the foundation of the Institute of Historical Research within that university marked the definite adhesion of its authorities to the belief that the training of historical investigators is both practicable and desirable. We may therefore appropriately direct our attention to the London curriculum as an example of what has proved a valuable preliminary course for entrants upon research training.

The curriculum for B.A. Honours in History is divided into three main 'Branches,' all designed upon a common plan :—

Branch I, Ancient History ; Branch II, Medieval and Modern History with special relation to the history of the West ; Branch III, Medieval and Modern History with special relation to the history of India and the East. By far the greater number of our students, as is only natural, take Branch II, but I will here consider the requirements for Branch III which will be, perhaps, of more interest to an audience in an In-



dian university. It should be noted that each of the Branches has some requirements in common with other Branches, and all alike form parts of a single History School. Thus Medieval European History is common to all three Branches; Modern European History and Modern British History enter into both Branches II and III, while the History of Political Ideas (ancient, medieval, modern and oriental) belongs to all three and there are common courses and examination papers.

The work done by every candidate falls into three parts. There is first the general body of historical knowledge with which everyone must be familiar before he can place the results of any intensive study in their right setting. The student taking Branch III must know the history of India in general outline both in the medieval and modern periods. He must be familiar with the works of the great historians who have written on the subject, and he must be able to distinguish critically between traditional fictions and soundly documented historical facts. He must have a knowledge of the generally accepted history of England and the British Empire with which the history of modern India is integrally associated. The civilisation of the modern Orient derives from two founts, and the student must therefore know in outline the general history of the European peoples since the first close contact of East and West in the sixteenth century and the general history of the East since the days of the great Muslim conquests in the seventh century. The



History of Political Ideas has already been mentioned. All this kind of extensive work makes great demands on the student's memory as so much of his earlier education has done ; but it also demands the cultivation of his powers of selection and discrimination, for the fields to be explored are so wide that no lectures can cover them all, and very much of his knowledge must be acquired by the student in his own reading. Just as a student of Chemistry spends two-thirds or more of his time in the practical laboratory, so the Honours student in History must spend a similar proportion of his time in the well-equipped library which is his *laboratorium*. In fact, his own reading under direction plays a more important part in his training than any of his lectures, though both are essential to the course.

Beyond the obligatory subjects that form two-thirds of the requirements, the student is encouraged to follow his own bent for more intensive study. He may choose between a variety of special aspects of history within his general field, and having chosen a particular subject, he must study not only in the books written about it but also in the materials from which the history has been made. " At some point of the course it is well to cease the inpouring of other men's ideas, to sink the pupil in the student and turn him loose into the wilderness of irrelevance that provides the stuff out of which history must be extracted. Let the student try his prentice hand upon this raw material, the documents that have come down to us from the past ; let him essay the

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historian's task and endeavour to digest some history of his own finding, instead of continuing to devote his whole attention to the absorption of history ready digested by others."* A series of "Special Subjects" is prescribed, one of which is to be chosen. Each is to be studied in a prescribed collection of printed original documents covering something like 2,000 printed pages. The subject deals only with a narrow period or topic, and in his work upon it the student has to use something like the methods of the original investigator. The work is not really research, but a passable imitation of it in materials that have undergone a preliminary sifting. When the candidate comes to be examined, he will not be expected to depend solely upon his memory, but the documents will be furnished to him in the examination room and the questions set to him will test his facility in handling them.† This is the part of the B.A. curriculum where the student comes into contact for the first time with the methods of the investigator, and if he is among the abler people of his year, he finds it by far the most interesting and educative part of the course. He is trained for it in a small class that resembles a practical laboratory class in Chemistry or Physics. There is little or nothing in the way of lectures, but much discussion among the members of the class

* Newton, A. P. *Select Documents relating to the Unification of South Africa*. Introduction. Vol. I, p. xvi.

† University of London. *Regulations in the Faculty of Arts for Internal Students*, p. 136, note 76.

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under the general guidance of the teacher. It resembles the meeting of a post-graduate seminar and the seminar method is thus applied before graduation, the prescribed materials being handled after the fashion of original MSS. It is unnecessary to enter into details here, but those who desire further information may refer to the Introduction to a series of select documents which I have prepared for one of our most widely studied Special Subjects and which I quoted above.

In supplement to his Special Subject each student takes a general paper relating to the background of the subject that he has chosen, and his method of studying this lies midway between that employed in the obligatory and that in the special. The work is partly documentary and partly extensive.

To sum up. Before a student is permitted to enter upon post-graduate training in History in London, he has to prove that he has (1) a sound knowledge of general history, (2) a more intensive knowledge of one particular field, chosen by himself, and (3) some power of handling historical problems as they are presented to him in documentary materials. Those who have satisfied these preliminary requirements can justify their claim to be allowed to enter upon the task of investigation. After several years' experience we have proved that this method of preliminary training and test gives us the type of student we need for research in London, while it also suits those who do not go on



beyond the first degree. Thus two ends are achieved by our curriculum, for it gives all our History Honours students some inkling of what research means and how history is written, and at the same time it affords a training for the best of them that leads on direct to their work for the higher degrees.

III. THE CHOICE OF A SUBJECT OF RESEARCH.

During the last year of his undergraduate work the student has seen something of the methods employed by the historian in handling documentary material, and he will have discovered whether he has any special liking for such work. His teachers will have noted those among their pupils who seem likely to do well in post-graduate study and when the time comes to apply for entry to the seminar, the promising student will find the door to original work open to him. It is sometimes wrongly assumed that the applicant must come ready provided with some "subject" that he proposes to investigate or that he must importune his professor to allot him such a "subject" at once: This is a misconception and leads inevitably to disappointment and waste of effort. The choice of a profitable field of investigation is one of the most critical and difficult steps in the career of the aspirant, and it cannot be accomplished in a moment. The decision that he



makes will have a great influence for good or ill on his subsequent training, and it must only be made after considerable preparatory work. It is with this choice and the preparation for it that we must now deal.

If the candidate attempts to decide for himself the exact problem to which to direct his attention, he will most probably pitch upon some wide, general question which would demand the labours of many investigators if it were capable of a definite answer at all. Or it could only be given satisfactory treatment by a first-rate historian who could correlate and synthetise the results of dozens of patiently compiled monographs. It is one of the commonest experiences of those who direct post-graduate work in history to find that the weaker of the students who come to them propose the widest and least answerable questions to investigate and that those questions are usually chosen in the most difficult of all fields of historical enquiry, that of opinion and political ideas. Such subjects for research as "Public Opinion and the American Revolution," "The Humanitarians and the Idea of Liberty" or "Toleration in South Africa" are common suggestions among budding researchers, and very slight experience is sufficient to shew that though they may be suitable subjects for historical essays or composition exercises, it is hopeless to expect that any but mature historians can add anything profitable and fresh to the piles of literature that have been written about them.



On the other hand, if the professor incautiously gives way to a student's importunity and indicates to him without preparation that some topic would repay research and be of manageable proportions, he will find that the weaker a student is, the more eagerly he will seize upon the topic as he would have done upon a subject proposed for an undergraduate essay. The idea is not his but his professor's, and while he may do the mechanical parts of the research passably well, he will put into it no initiative or originality and but little thought. If any results of value are to be obtained, it will be necessary for the professor to furnish the historical thinking, and the valuable parts of the resulting monograph will be supplied by him and not by the nominal author at all. Of course, he may refuse to do anything of the sort, and the outcome will add but another lump to the mass of waste paper that has been piled up from the dull and uninspired rubbish of "theses" that litters the shelves of university libraries. This is the sort of thing that makes "thesis" almost a term of contempt among historical scholars.

In the seminars of some of the less inspired German historians there was a practice whereby students were definitely allocated to carry out some minutely indicated piece of investigation that was subsidiary to the main piece of research in which the professor was engaged. The student was thus converted into a mere assistant and his training in initiative neglected or narrowed to serve the in-



terests of another. With a number of assistants working each upon a minute fragment of his subject the Master could get a large output of publication over his own name, but the practice was very undesirable and it did much to degrade the reputation for historical teaching that had been won by the great German founders of the method of seminar training in the mid-nineteenth century. For its defects the professors rather than the students were responsible, and any teacher who adopts the practice is unlikely long to retain the reputation of his seminar.

The only really satisfactory way to launch students into research is to apply gentle and unobtrusive guidance of their initiative in a profitable direction, and we must now try to see where such a direction may lie. The student has already indicated by his choice of a seminar the general trend of his historical interest; he will not join a group unless he wishes to work along the line its members are pursuing. Thus he will not go to work under a medieval scholar if his interests are predominantly modern; if he has been specially attracted by economic questions in his undergraduate course, it is unlikely that he will apply to enter the seminar of a professor who is a specialist in the nicer points of constitutional history or the history of foreign policy. But let us assume that he has secured admission to a seminar that is suited to him and try to trace how he will settle down to a definite piece of research. In his early interviews his director



finds that the student is specially interested in some period or some branch of the general topic with which the seminar is concerned. The discussions are gradually narrowed down to the debatable points that stand out in connection with the period or topic, and the student begins to fasten upon some of these points that specially attract him. He comes to perceive that all the history that has been written about the time is but an approximation to the truth; it is as though a loose network of trails has been plotted through the area, leaving large spaces still unexplored, and the student settles down in one of those untraversed spaces and determines to map it thoroughly. To change the metaphor, he sets himself to weave the network closer and to bring more facts about the period or topic into relation with one another so as to arrive at a closer approximation to historical truth. When he has come to this resolution upon sound consideration, he has, in fact, found a "subject" for himself, and has already gone some way to make it his own.

The student, let us hope, realises very early that he must not be too ambitious, and that if he is to achieve any results that are really worth while, he must limit the area to be explored by the time at his disposal. If his work is well done, he ought to clear up his chosen field so thoroughly that it is not possible for others to come along after him and glean easily accessible data that he has missed. This does not mean, of course, that he can expect to write a piece of unassailable history, but that he ought to



set himself to discover every scrap of evidence concerning his subject, and that he must sift and sort that evidence so as to make a historical synthesis that is as complete as he can make it.

It has been my experience that after three months' preliminary work a capable student can easily settle down to the detailed investigation of a chosen subject. Though he felt at first that he was floundering through a fog of disconnected 'facts' which he could not bring into relation with one another and was stumbling over endless irrelevancies, this mood of disillusion soon passes as he goes on with his work, and before long he is contentedly labouring along his chosen path, even though he cannot yet see whither it is trending. When one of my students gets into that frame of mind, I feel that the time has come to propose to him three rather searching questions and to require him to answer those questions satisfactorily under the drastic cross-examination of his fellow-students in the *colloquium* of the seminar, *i.e.*, its weekly meeting for discussion. Unless he can do this to the satisfaction of the people who are working alongside him, he is unlikely to be able to answer the criticisms of more experienced historians. He will go blundering along to pile fact upon fact without much regard for their relative importance or significance; he may be learning how to dig in the records, but he is not going far towards becoming a historian.



The three questions are as follows, and I will attempt to explain the purpose of each in turn :—

- (a) Is there material available from which the problems involved in the chosen subject may be answered? If so, where is it?
- (b) Has this material already been explored and a satisfactory solution to the problems been found by any former investigator? If his solution is considered unsatisfactory or his treatment inadequate, on what grounds is this so decided?
- (c) Are the problems worth study as historical problems, and what additions to historical knowledge may be expected from the results obtained? Will they merely add fresh information or will they bear a definite relation to important historical movements?

Let us consider each of these questions in some detail.

(a) There are numberless historical questions of interest and importance that we should like to answer if we could, but we have no available historical material. The further back in history we go the scantier become the records in which our investigations must be carried on, but even in the modern period there are questions that defy solution owing



to lack of material. I need not labour the point, for such questions will come to the mind of every one. However careful and detailed the research there are some things in the life of the past that we shall never be able to recover.

But, setting aside such things, there are some important historical questions in every period to which an answer cannot be given because, though the material for their solution exists, it is not available for investigation. It may be in governmental archives that are not yet opened to the investigator. Thus the full story of the colonial difficulties that played such a large part in the relations between England and France in the 'seventies and 'eighties of the 19th century cannot yet be told for two reasons. The English Colonial and Foreign Office archives are fully opened down to 1878, but they are closed to historical investigators beyond that date and the most critical period in those questions comes after 1884. The French colonial archives are closed for the whole period, so that any investigator who was at work upon that period could see only one side of the story and would be bound to tell it from the British standpoint. It may be known that the papers of a statesman who played a first-rate part in a series of events, are in the possession of his heirs, but they may refuse access to them and so the investigator is deprived of the confidential material that is needed to explain the documents contained in the public archives.



All these and many other obstacles may be found to prevent satisfactory research into a subject that would clearly repay it, and the student in his preliminary survey of his chosen subject ought to discover most of the more important of these obstacles and make up his mind whether they are insuperable. He will find what material is available before he can decide what is not, and in answering this first question before the seminar he should generally map out the original materials in which he proposes to work.

(b) The answer to the second question, *i.e.*, as to whether he has been anticipated, will involve a pretty thorough survey of all that has been printed in relation to his subject. The results of a good deal of historical investigation are not fully printed now-a-days, but remain in the form of unpublished theses on the shelves of university libraries. It is perhaps too much to expect the student to search all these store-houses of learning, but he will be well advised if he does so as far as he is able, for though the results in their original form may not be published, yet the investigator who has done the work may be preparing it for publication in some other form, and nothing is more exasperating to one who has devoted much time and labour to a particular research to find himself anticipated by the publication of a finished study of his subject just as he is beginning to shape his ideas. He should carefully go through the lists of historical theses on which the



universities have granted degrees that are periodically published in the pages of *History*, the quarterly journal of the Historical Association, the *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* and the *American Historical Review*. Lists of French and German theses are accessible in certain of the great libraries. In his search for data to answer this second question, the student will have gone a long way towards the compilation of the bibliography of his subject that is an absolutely essential part of his work, and to this point I shall return later.

(c) The third question as to whether his chosen subject is worth undertaking is in some ways the most interesting one of the three, because it involves historical judgment as well as patience and skill. Will the results obtained from the investigation be likely to add anything of value to historical knowledge and, if so, what will be the probable relation of the results to other well-established facts in the general field? This is the question to which the criticisms of his fellow-workers in the seminar will be directed, and in order to meet those criticisms it is necessary that the student shall have a sound knowledge of what has already been done. In his preliminary reading he has been tracing out the paths explored by earlier investigators and it may be that he has discovered one of those paths that ends abruptly on the edge of the unknown and has decided that his work shall be directed to the extension of that path by carrying further the research of his



predecessor. Thus it may be that the growth of some particular governmental institution has been traced, let us say for example, down to the end of the eighteenth century, but that nothing has been done to describe its growth in the first half of the nineteenth century though the institution continued to function. To investigate that later growth would obviously be a piece of work of historical value, and the student will find little difficulty in justifying his choice of the subject. He can take up the work where his predecessor laid it down, and by carrying it on along the same lines and with similar methods his task ought to be comparatively simple and straight-forward. But before he begins it, the new investigator ought to ask himself whether the previous scholar is likely to be continuing his researches in the field that he has made his own.

But let us suppose that this is not the case. The earlier work may have been completed many years ago, or the previous writer may have abandoned research or have decisively turned to other fields of investigation. The student will sometimes find that the leader of his seminar has abandoned some piece of work in this way and will be ready to welcome some one who will carry it on. This arrangement is ideal, for the student can get his guidance from one who already has a good deal of expert knowledge of profitable lines along which to explore. But before he begins, he should try to find out why the particular subject was abandoned and make sure that it is worth while to pursue it further. It often



happens that a political institution grows rapidly and freely at one period and then settles down and continues to function in the succeeding period in routine fashion and without further modification. The first investigator may have discovered this and abandoned his study when the institution had become set, and it is hardly worth while to carry the exploration further.

But, on the other hand, it may be that the earlier research was stopped at the end of the period in which the investigator was interested, and that the institution took on a different form and branched out into new functions. In such a case the new investigation may offer great promise, and if the student can satisfactorily accomplish his work, he may achieve results of considerable value. Governmental institutions have a persistent life, and research upon an institution in one period may clear up many obscure points about its history in a distant century. It is here that the historian is on his safest and most scientific ground, for when two investigators working independently on the same organism at different periods produce results that are clearly associated with one another, there can be no doubt that a similar evolutionary process has been at work in the political as in the biological sphere.

Many students prefer to look for narrative rather than institutional subjects to work upon, and though this type of work may at first seem easier, there are many pitfalls to be avoided. The special danger is that a mere collection of chronological



data may be accumulated without any significant history being extractable from them. Almost an infinite number of ' facts ' can be ascertained about any modern period, but only certain of them have real significance. An institutional subject is limited by confining attention to one particular organ of government, like a council or a financial office and tracing the variations in its ways of working over a certain period. A narrative subject is limited in a different way. It investigates the story not of a particular organ of government, but of a whole section of the community within certain chronological limits, and here again if the subject is to be worth investigation it must have movement and significant change. The story of a particular district or town during uneventful times may admit of the accumulation of numberless details concerning the lives and actions of the individuals who lived there, and such facts may be of interest to a local antiquary, but annals of this kind do not make history. If, however, the town or district played a part of importance in relation to some great historical movement or series of events that affected the life of the nation, its story may be worthy of investigation and suitable subject for training.

Thus to take a concrete instance, the story of an English parish or agricultural county during, let us say, the uneventful years between 1850 and 1880 would afford a multiplicity of facts, but they would be of little more than purely local interest and have no particular importance in extending our know-



ledge of the significant movements that make the history of the nation and its institutions. But if the course of events in the same locality were explored in a time of national crisis, say for example, during the period of the Great Rebellion, the resulting story might throw further light upon the details of that struggle, and such a piece of research might be well worth undertaking.

The real fact of the matter is that history can only be written round a theme and that it must be devoted to the illustration of an idea or chain of ideas. That this is true does not mean that the student must start out with a preconceived notion and set himself to discover facts that will bolster up that notion. But it does mean that from the beginning he ought to have some idea of what he is setting out to accomplish, and though he may change his ideas repeatedly in the course of his work and may even find that the path that he is following leads to an entirely different goal to that he set out to reach, yet it was the possession of a theme that alone would make it possible for his work to be really historical at all.

Let me again insist upon the fact that the theme he pursues must bear a significant relation to the main lines of historical development. If it does not, his results even though they may have some slight interest will lead merely to the production of an historical anecdote and be of little importance. A student is often tempted to choose as his subject the life and work of some obscure person whose



name occurs in history of his time, but of whom little is known. Such a piece of work may lead to the production of a biography, but is unlikely to be of much historical value unless the person studied had some real influence in his sphere of action, and that sphere was one in which significant historical movements were stirring. This implies that it is the movement that supplies the theme and not the personage. Biographical research is always needed in history training, but biography as such is a different art and it does not, as a rule, make a very good training ground for the young historian.

It is not advisable for the student to delimit his field of work too narrowly at the beginning, though he always ought to choose a limited field. As his work proceeds, he will probably find that in tracing a movement he must go back further in time than he at first expected in order to discover the early roots from which it sprang. He is almost certain, too, to find that at the beginning he has given himself too long a period to cover, and that he must cut it down if he is not to scamp and hurry over some essential parts of the subject. It is far better that as the work proceeds, he should apply to his professor to limit his subject more narrowly in order that he may clear up his research thoroughly with the means at his disposal. If he can shew sound historical reasons for his application, there is little doubt of its being granted, and thus before he has been long at work, he will feel that he is tackling a problem that is his own and one that is of manage-



able proportions. When he reaches this stage some of the cloud of disillusion that has befogged him will be dispersed, and he will lose that sense of aimless futility which affects so many when they first begin research. He will realise that at last he is launched upon his own "subject," and that upon his shoulders alone rests the responsibility to work it out.

IV. THE PROCESS OF SEARCH FOR MATERIAL.

If after the completion of a historical monograph one looks back upon one's work and attempts to separate out the various stages through which it has gone, one may, I think, divide the whole process into three parts :—

1. The search for material and the extraction from it of the various data relevant to the research.
2. The correlation of those data and their adaptation to the chosen theme.
3. The presentation of the results in a clear and readable form.

The first stage involves none of the historian's *art* but is purely *scientific*. It demands a variety of technical knowledge and familiarity with the use of many sorts of historical apparatus. This is the sphere in which training is most useful and can be most easily carried on. Any intelligent student can be taught to be fairly proficient



in the technique involved. The second stage is necessarily concurrent with the first, but extends beyond it. It involves a much subtler training, for now the student's historical sense must be cultivated, his judgment developed and his critical powers enlarged. There is here no mere acquiring of somewhat mechanical skill but something more exacting. The student must be taught how to *think together* the raw material that he has collected, and how to extract the history that lies within it. Training is undoubtedly valuable in this second stage, but one can never be certain that it will be effective. Some students will profit greatly and others not at all, those who belong to the seminar will soon separate themselves out, and before they have been long at work, it will soon become clear who possess some real faculty for constructive research and who do not.

The third stage is one that is almost purely artistic and involves little of a scientific sort. The art of presentation of historical results in an appropriate and pleasing literary form is one in which the training must differ widely from that employed in the two earlier stages, and it may be doubted whether it can really be effectual unless the student has some natural sense of style. To this literary training we can devote comparatively little attention and we must mainly confine ourselves to the first two stages. Let us consider first the gathering of the raw material and the practical methods by which training can be effectively carried on.



There are not more than a few books that may be recommended to the student for guidance as to the methods he should adopt, but I have found one or two of considerable value, and I always recommend them to those who come to work in my seminar. The first is a little book by Prof. Ernest Scott of the University of Melbourne called *History and Historical Problems*, published by the Oxford University Press. It deals generally with the processes of historical thinking and the relation of history to other branches of knowledge. Its many references to and quotations from the works of the great historical writers are most stimulating and suggestive, and students may profitably be recommended to read it again and again during the early part of their work.

The second book is even more suggestive and offers many practical counsels of great value derived from the experience of an archivist of ripe wisdom. Mr. C. G. Crump, late Assistant Keeper of the Public Records, has written two little books that are of help to the budding historian. The first *The Logic of History* (published by the S.P.C.K.) is a brief essay upon a similar theme to that treated by Prof. Scott, but perhaps more philosophic in its treatment and deriving its illustrations rather from the materials for history found in the English public records of the medieval period than from the finished works of the great historians from which Prof. Scott derives his instances. But it is as suggestive to those who are working in the more recent periods as to the



professed medievalist. It serves practically as an introduction to Mr. Crump's other book, *History and Historial Research* (published by Messrs. Geo. Routledge and Sons) which I have found to be a particularly valuable guide to clear thinking and systematic work. It does not profess to describe the mechanical processes of the historian or to give detailed instructions as to how he should carry on his work, but is devoted to the principles that should guide him and with the aid of illustrations from research in medieval history shews how those principles may be carried into practice. To quote a sentence or two from its first chapter :—" It is the mind of the historical enquirer at which [the] book is aimed, his mental processes and his ways of thought, not indeed the mind of the accomplished scholar to whom inquiry has become a second nature, but the mind of the beginner, the tentative struggler, or even that of the worker who has never attained to any confidence in his own methods, one who...is still wondering whether...he might not have done more, if his energies had been better or otherwise directed."

The other books that I specially recommend are narrower and more directly practical. There is first a series of little books published by the S.P.C.K. under the title of *Helps for Students of History*. Each of these is devoted to serve as an introduction to some particular practical subject needed by students and they form most useful handbooks of information as to various branches of historical tech-



nique. Secondly students should consult the valuable *Introduction to Historical Research* by Profs. Langlois and Seignobos of which there is a good English translation. This book is devoted mainly to the considerations of the canons of criticism of historical evidence employed by workers, especially in the early medieval period. The work is more specialised in character than the other books to which I have referred, but though difficult for students who are working in a more recent period it affords much guidance as to the critical methods that must be employed by all historical investigators and thus can be consulted with advantage by everyone who is beginning his training.

Let us now turn to consider in greater detail the way in which a student may be guided to search for the material in which he must pursue the investigation of his chosen subject. The subjects that are being investigated by members of the seminar will have been selected from fields differing widely in period and topic, and of necessity therefore the sources and character of their materials will be various. If we were to attempt to classify materials systematically so as to cover the whole ground we should produce a paper scheme of no practical use, and I therefore do not propose to make the attempt. I will confine my attention instead to the type of material explored by the students who are working with me on the history of the outer parts of the British Empire. This will provide an illustration of the way in which some historical problems may



be approached, and similar methods may be adapted to other fields. The field is one that branches out of English history and my illustration will therefore be more readily adaptable to English history than to other and more distant fields like Oriental history or the history of medieval Europe.

Before the student can begin to work upon original and unexplored material, he must familiarise himself with the use of what we may call the tools that will enable him to read his documents. Down to the sixteenth century most English and European documents are written in Latin and their investigator must necessarily have a good working knowledge of Medieval Latin. They are written upon parchment in special forms of writing that employ many abbreviations and technical forms. In order to be able to read the MSS. the student must therefore have some working knowledge of the paleography of English official documents, but the investigator who works in a more recent period will have little need of such knowledge and need not take any classes in Paleography as the medievalist must do. From the sixteenth century down to the middle of the seventeenth the MSS will largely be written in English upon paper and the writing becomes much freer and more varied. The old official forms and Latin are still used in the most formal instruments and records so that some paleographical facility is still useful, but mostly the student has to accustom himself to read easily the current English Tudor-Stuart hand-writing and this



will involve constant practice and much application. A working knowledge of modern European languages is essential, and Spanish and French are especially necessary for those who are working on the history of the expansion of the European peoples oversea. Dutch is also necessary for some subjects, for it is most unsatisfactory and fatal to good work to be dependent upon the translations of others and to be unable to read the documents that tell the other side of the struggle for oversea commerce and colonial power in which the English and the Dutch were rivals. Portuguese, too, is required for some subjects, and generally we may say that it is essential for the student to become thoroughly familiar with any language that is frequently employed in the materials he is studying. Linguistic requirements such as these are clearly applicable to all periods since the sixteenth century, and if the subject of investigation deals with international relations or the field of diplomacy it is absolutely necessary that the student shall be really expert in reading the languages used in the negotiations.

Manuscript historical materials are found in large quantity in two kinds of repositories, archives and miscellaneous collections. The *archives* of a particular government or institution contain the files of documents used by that government in carrying on its business. In modern times almost every governmental order is written down, *i.e.*, placed on record, as it is given. A copy of the order is kept upon the files of the office together with



the correspondence that has preceded it, and in due course these files are sent for preservation to the repository of records. There, if all goes smoothly, they remain in a steadily growing pile, and such piles form the archives of the government or institution. The historian as a rule, finds in such archives his most valuable and dependable evidence, for the records were not, save in rare cases, drawn up for the benefit of posterity, but were the actual instruments by which the actions of government were carried on.

At the very beginning of his work the student must discover where the archives containing materials of interest to him are preserved, and he must learn how to look for what he is likely to want within those stores of MSS. The Public Record Office in Chancery Lane, London, is by far the most important repository of archives in the British Empire, and most of the work of the students in an English seminar is done within its walls in what is called the Literary Search Room.

The archives of the East India Company and the Secretary of State for India are preserved in the Library of the India Office in Whitehall, London, and the archives of the two Houses of Parliament in their libraries at Westminster. Other important archives in London containing valuable historical material are those of the Corporation of the City of London preserved in the Guildhall and of the Archbishopric of Canterbury at Lambeth Palace. There are many archives in England of lesser im-



portance and perhaps the most easily accessible survey of the more important of them and the conditions governing access is to be found in the volumes edited by Prof. C. M. Andrews and Miss Frances Davenport and published by the Carnegie Institution of Washington called *Guide to the Materials in British Archives relating to the History of the United States to 1783*. I always recommend my students to consult this work for its valuable collateral information concerning the MSS. even though the work they are engaged upon has no connection with the American colonies.

Since most students engaged in historical research will, at some time or another, have to work in the archives of the Public Record Office, we may take that collection to illustrate the way in which practical work may begin and the means that are available to facilitate it. The Public Record Office is more systematically arranged and better provided with apparatus to assist investigators than are most other archives, but whatever the collection of records in which the student is working he may be advised to look first for aids to their study similar to those here described.

Access to the Literary Search Room of the P.R.O. is granted to properly qualified persons engaged in historical research upon application to the Deputy-Keeper of the Public Records supported by reference to a person of recognised position. The official *Guide to the Public Records* (2 Vols.) by M. Giuseppi gives a general description of the various



classes of records and some historical account of the way in which each class was produced. The student should explore this *Guide* very closely in order to discover any class of records that is likely to contain a considerable bulk of material relating to his chosen subject. He should note from the *Guide* the historical outline of the growth of the governmental institution that has produced the records, for this will probably explain the technical form in which they are drawn and it may help him to escape a common pitfall of mistaking what is but common form for historical information of importance. If the student is working in a period of British history after 1660 he will probably find his principal source of material in the archives of the Secretaries of State which are called shortly "State Papers." These consist in the main of the original letters received in the offices of the Secretaries of State and copies or drafts of the letters sent out from those offices. The whole of these collections are provided with lists of the bound volumes contained in them arranged in order of date. These lists are printed in the series called *Lists and Indexes* published by the P.R.O., but such lists do not contain references to individual papers. The volumes to which they refer were bound up either at the time or more recently from the papers dealt with in the office concerned during a particular short period, say, a year or even a quarter or a month, so that any volume may contain a great variety of papers bearing upon many subjects. It is necessary therefore to go through every paper in search of



anything bearing upon the subject in hand and this labour cannot be avoided. There are sometimes contemporary calendars or *précis* of the matters dealt with in individual papers, and the student should make a careful search for such a calendar before he begins his work. There are frequently notes in the printed *Lists and Indexes* as to the existence of contemporary calendars, and besides the printed lists there are sometimes earlier MS. lists including more detailed information. A complete type-written *List of Lists in the P.R.O.* can be found on the shelves of the Literary Search Room and it often affords valuable indications that are worth following up.

In this connection it may be well to say a word or two about the various methods that are employed to facilitate access to a long series of records. The simplest form used is the bald chronological list with indications of the place where each document or volume may be found upon the shelves and the dates covered. Each volume may contain a hundred or a hundred and fifty separate documents, but this sort of list gives no indications of this and it is necessary to search each volume in detail for what is required. The next form gives a simple description in a few words of the character of the documents contained in the volume, and this may be increased until the mere list develops into a complete *catalogue raisonnée* in which three or four lines are given to each volume.

The next step takes us to a very simple calendar which lists the papers contained in each volume, but



gives little information beyond their date and writers. A real calendar invariably gives this information but indicates also the main subject dealt with in each document, and so we may proceed in greater detail until the calendar gives a brief précis of each of the less important subjects dealt with while reproducing almost *in extenso* the information given about all important subjects. Such calendars as these last are of the utmost value to the student, and when they are fully indexed, they enormously facilitate his work. The Public Record Office has published full calendars of many of the series of State Papers and some of the series have been carried down to the beginning of the eighteenth century, but beyond that date little has yet been done, and only a few fragmentary calendars of later documents can be found scattered here and there among the appendices to the published *Reports of the Deputy-Keeper of the Public Records* which may repay search.

It is, of course, impossible here to attempt even a cursory view of the enormous wealth of material contained in the British archives. However carefully and laboriously the student works, he can never exhaust the stores of documents relating to his chosen subject that the P.R.O. may contain. As he works he will find more and more avenues opening to him, and if he has something of the real zest for research, he will come to regard his days in the Literary Search Room as an adventure. The passion of the chase will seize him and he will be amply repaid



for hours of fruitless turning over of pages by a sudden find when and where he least expected it.

Every collection of public archives has its own regulations governing access to the documents, and the student is likely to save himself disappointment by familiarising himself with those regulations before commencing work. Thus the documents in the P.R.O. are generally accessible without special restriction down to the year 1878, but there are still a few classes of confidential papers to which access is only granted by special permission and this permission in the interests of the public service it is not easy to obtain. After 1878 access to the papers is restricted to those who receive permits from the government departments concerned and submit their notes for censorship. Foreign archives are much less liberal, as a rule, in granting access to historical investigators, and those who wish to work in the modern MSS. in Paris or Berlin will find considerable restrictions to overcome. Recently there has been an enquiry into the accessibility of foreign archives conducted by the Committee on Intellectual Co-operation of the League of Nations upon the motion of the Institute of Historical Research. The results of that enquiry have been printed in successive numbers of the *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* and are therefore easily accessible.

Besides his researches in the archives upon the governmental papers that have been retained in their files, the student must explore the great miscellaneous collections of MSS. of which by far the most



important relating to British history is that in the British Museum. The vicissitudes of history have set adrift many documents from their proper repository and many private papers of importance for almost every subject have never come into the archives but have been scattered in every direction. When such papers have come into the market, they have been gathered up by collectors and in course of time the most important of them come as a rule into one or other of the great public libraries. While a repository of archives contains only the papers proceeding from a governmental institution, the miscellaneous collections contain MSS. of every sort, and their exploration is therefore in some ways less straightforward. The MSS. collections in the British Museum are constantly receiving additions and the only way to discover material relevant to a subject of research is by a careful use of the admirable and detailed catalogues that are prepared. As an introduction to the methods that may profitably be employed in such investigations we may say something about these catalogues, for they afford a model that is frequently followed by other collections.

The MSS. are consulted in what is known as the Students' Room of the Department of MSS. to which access is granted on written application to the Principal Librarian. This application must state the purpose for which access is desired and must be supported by reference to a person of recognised position. There is at the entrance to the Students' Room a great manuscript catalogue arranged accord-



ing to the subjects treated in the MSS. and search should first be made in this catalogue. It does not profess to be complete, since it has been made up of extracts from other lists, and the fact that it contains no entries that appear to be relevant to the subject of research does not imply that nothing is to be found in the collection. The detailed catalogues are to be found in a long series of printed volumes whose use presents certain difficulties. The little handbook on the MSS. in the British Museum by their Keeper, Mr. J. P. Gilson, published by the S.P.C.K. in *Helps for Students of History* to which reference has already been made, shews how the collection has been built up during the last two centuries, and reference should in the first instance be made to it, for such historical information will often afford guidance to the investigator as to where he may profitably search.

The nucleus of the British Museum MSS. lay in the great miscellaneous collections made by or for Sir Robert Cotton in the first part of the seventeenth century and Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford and Sir Hans Sloane in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Each of these, the Cotton, Harleian and Sloane MSS. has its own printed catalogue giving lists of the MSS. and provided with somewhat imperfect indexes. The date at which the collection was made will tell the student whether it is worth his while to explore its contents, for it is clearly impossible to expect to find MSS. relating to events in the nineteenth century in a collection that



was completed in the seventeenth. But the converse is not true, for a seventeenth century MS. is very likely to be found in a miscellaneous collection formed in a later century. The Stowe collection made for the Dukes of Buckingham and Chandos and the Lansdowne collection made by the Earl of Shelburne (afterwards Marquis of Lansdowne) in the eighteenth century have also their own catalogues and there are some less numerous groups, but most of the MSS. in the British Museum are gathered in the great class called "Additional MSS."—additional that is to say, to the original collections of the Cotton, Harleian and Sloane MSS. There is also a class of Egerton MSS. to which additions are regularly made, and these are catalogued at periodical intervals since the 'thirties of the nineteenth century and lists of them published; it is to these volumes that the student must refer. Each gives first a list of the MSS. and their principal contents in order of their accession, and then a complete index of writers' names and some references to the subjects dealt with in the papers. The best way to begin exploring them seems to be to search the index for the names of persons and places that are of importance to the subject of research. If such references are found, the MS. in which they occur should be examined and its source ascertained and so clues found which may lead on to further discoveries of material. It is impossible to expect that the work will be easy or that rapid results can be obtained. Persistence and patience are necessary,



and as the search goes forward the student will find his capacity for it increase and his ability to recognise valuable clues to collateral material will grow. Bit by bit he will accumulate a growing mass of information, and all the time he will be getting nearer the heart of his subject and seeing more clearly its history.

We need not pursue further our description of such miscellaneous collections of MSS., for their number is almost infinite, and every subject will carry its investigator in a different direction, but we must not omit to mention the only other collection in England which by its magnitude and importance approaches the British Museum MSS. This is the Bodleian Collection at Oxford originally begun by Sir Thomas Bodley under Queen Elizabeth and constantly added to since that time. The catalogue apparatus of the Bodleian collection is less perfect than that of the Museum, but the best way to begin work upon it is somewhat similar.

Lastly we must mention the MSS. that have been calendared by the labours of the Historical Manuscript Commission. These collections are scattered up and down the British Isles in the hands of private owners or in the possession of public bodies. Sometimes they are of the character of archives, sometimes miscellaneous collections. In the earlier work of the Commission which began in the 'seventies, the papers were merely listed in Appendices to its Reports, but later the MSS. were fully calendared in volumes provided with good indexes.



There is no general index to the volumes, though a somewhat imperfect topographical index has been published. Reference should first be made to this, and then a general search made through the indexes to separate out volumes of papers that seem likely to be of importance. It is often impossible to secure access to the papers themselves and only the calendar will be available. As a rule the précis given will be so full as to obviate the need for further reference, but, if not, the student must endeavour to gain access to whatever documents he knows will be of importance to him and this may involve him in adventures that will carry him far afield.

Historical manuscripts by the accidents of fortune may often wander far from their original home, and though it may be known that such manuscripts once existed that contained essential information about the subject of research, it may be impossible to trace them. Help in the search for them can sometimes be obtained from the section in the *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* devoted to "The Migration of Manuscripts" and it is always well to glance through this in each of the quarterly issues. The journal *Notes and Queries*, too, sometimes may give useful clues, and the *English Historical Review*, the *American Historical Review* and the *Annual Reports of the American Historical Association* often publish manuscripts and careful search must be made through their back volumes. There is one direction in which detailed search will almost always repay an investigator.



Each of the more important men who were engaged in a particular historical movement in recent times will have usually left behind him a collection of his private papers, and the investigator should attempt to locate such collections and, if possible, get access to them. This attempt will be facilitated by tracing the genealogy of their descendants and heirs, by studying their testamentary dispositions and obituary notices. If he is successful, the student is likely to find invaluable materials for his research, and though the quest may be long and toilsome, it will well repay the trouble bestowed upon it.

Beyond a certain point it will be impossible for the student to obtain guidance in his search, for he will soon get to know much more about his subject and the available materials than anyone else. But it is always advisable to keep his director of studies and the fellow members of his seminar in touch with what he is doing. Their experience may give him help, and those who are working in allied fields will often be able to afford clues for him to follow up. Discussion with others will enable him to clarify his own ideas, and he will find that as his work goes on, he will come to look to the *colloquium* of the seminar as affording invaluable opportunities for him to test his progress and bring his researches into line with those of others.



V. THE COLLECTION AND UTILISATION OF DATA.

As soon as the search for material for his investigation has yielded some documents of importance, the student must begin to handle their contents and utilise them for his purpose, for it would be uneconomical of time to wait until all likely sources had been explored. The quest for new evidence can never cease so long as the work of investigation is being carried on. It must run concurrently with a second process, the utilisation of what is found, *i.e.*, the extraction from it of data relevant to the theme that is being pursued. To this second process we now turn. Every student's method must spring from his own invention if he is to do any good and original work, but there are certain general counsels that may be given, and a few pointers derived from other people's experience may be of some service.

While the student has been preparing his first bibliography and exploring the printed material bearing upon his subject, he will have found some book or books which seem to paint the background of the chosen subject more fully and satisfactorily than do any others. It is a good plan to take one such book and read it very carefully, making its information a sort of datum line from which to put off into the unknown. Every historical subject must necessarily require a study of the succession of events in time, whether those events are a series of



actions or of stages in institutional growth. Some of these events stand out prominently and for many of them their dates can be accurately ascertained without difficulty. It is a good plan to begin a chronology of such events, which may be likened to the main timbers of a scaffolding. When those are well and truly erected and linked together, then bit by bit further datable events may be selected as relevant and inserted between them in the chronology and so a solid structure of fact is erected. The chronology will become a guide to the progress of the subject and unless some such device as this is used, it will be difficult to keep the true succession of events clear; when the causes of events come to be unravelled and the results that have flowed from given causes elucidated, serious chronological mistakes may easily be made that will vitiate all the conclusions reached. Events will be attributed to causes that followed them in time and connections invented between facts that were only remotely associated.

One of the most serious errors that the student can make is to look at his history backwards, to read into the minds of the actors in earlier events motives and knowledge that can only have come to them or their successors long after those events and possibly only because they had occurred. The only safe attitude to assume is one of looking forward through the succession of time. The student must endeavour to forget for the time being everything that has happened since the events that he is studying. He



must steep himself in the ideas of the age and try to watch the course of events unrolling itself as time goes on. He must try to see things through the eyes of the men who were living while they were happening, and as his work goes on the student will gradually find this forward-looking attitude so congenial that he will feel himself living in the period that he is studying.

The preparation of his chronology will draw the student's attention to questions of dating which may prove very difficult at a later stage, but into the niceties of which he need not yet enter. There are, however, certain outstanding points to notice from the beginning. If Oriental history is being studied, a variety of methods of reckoning time may be met with, and it may at first be somewhat difficult to bring the dates that are found into relation with the standard modern time scale, that of the Christian era. These difficulties must, however, be faced and the dates of the principal events shewn in the chronology must be fully and certainly established upon the standard scale before much of value can be attempted. Even in the history of modern times in Western Europe there are many pitfalls in dating and these must be guarded against. The principal of them occur in connection with the Julian or old-style calendar and the Gregorian or new style. There are several handbooks for the use of historians dealing with this matter, but perhaps the one that is most useful is Bond's well-known *Handy Book for Verifying Dates*.



The Gregorian reform of the Calendar was made by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582 and it was rapidly introduced into Roman Catholic countries at dates which are listed on p. 770 of Vol. III of the *Cambridge Modern History*. In England and the English-speaking countries, however, the reform was not introduced until 14 September 1752 and the Old Style continued in universal use. The dates of English documents until 1752 are therefore up to eleven days behind those of documents written on the same day in most Continental countries. It is essential to make certain what method of dating is being used by the writer of every document that is being dealt with, and it is well to convert every date to the standard scale before inserting it in the chronology. The actual date given in the document should, however, be also retained in order to avoid ambiguity, and the phrase *stilo vetero* (old style) or *stilo novo* (new style) added in the chronology and to the notes that are taken while the document is being studied.

Until 1752 the year began in England on March 25th and this often has led to mistakes in the dating of English documents. Such mistakes can be avoided by careful attention to the system of double dating which modern historians adopt. Thus to take an example 24 March, 1667 on an English document indicates that it was written on the day after 23 March, 1667, but almost a year later than a document written on 25 March, 1667 which began that year 1667 in England. We indi-



cate this by using a double date (*e.g.*, 24 March, 1667-8) for all documents written between 1 January and 24 March so that our dates will appear in order of time thus :—25 March, 1667, 1 January, 1667-8, 23 March, 1667-8, 24 March, 1667-8, 25 March, 1668.

If, however, we are dealing with a series of documents written some in England and some in a country using the Gregorian calendar, we must also be careful to allow for the difference between Old and New Style. There was 10 days' difference in 1667, and therefore an English document written on 1 March, 1667-8, was penned on the same day as one written in Paris on 11 March, 1668. At that period most persons writing in English to or from foreign countries indicated the style that they were using, and two men writing on the same day would date their letters :—" London, 1 March, 1667, *st. vet.*" and " Paris 11 March, 1668 *st. nov.*" The documents should be noted in the chronology under 11 March, 1668, the first having the explanatory additional date "(1 March, 1667-8)." The student must become so familiar with these niceties of dating as to verify instinctively the dates he meets with. If his work lies in the medieval period, he will find many more difficulties of dating than the investigator of more modern times encounters, but into these we need not enter. The one sound principle to adhere to is to keep the succession of events as clear as possible by means of a



working chronology in which all dates are measured by a common standard.

The main outlines of the chronology will be supplied from the work of previous investigators as summarised in published treatises. Some students find it well to exhaust the printed materials upon their subject before beginning to work upon the unpublished records, but I usually advise my pupils to carry on their work in the two sorts of material concurrently. There are some days on which it is impossible or inconvenient to get access to the records, and it is well therefore to have printed materials at hand to occupy the time. In reality the division of material into 'printed' and 'unprinted' is artificial and of no particular value for the purposes of research. Printing is rather of the nature of an accident, and it has no effect upon the character of the material. The real division is between original and secondary documents, and it is this division that must be kept in mind. Thus the reports of Parliamentary committees are a most important original source of information at some periods, but they are almost invariably referred to in their printed form, and it would rarely repay the trouble of searching for them in MS. form. There may often be found MS. histories of particular subjects or periods that have never been printed, but they are really only secondary sources and derive nothing of value from the fact that they are in MS. It is the character of the material that must be looked to and not its mere accidental form.



In dealing with any particular subject it will often be found that soon after a series of events have occurred an account of them was summarised for the information of those who were concerned in the movement. The student should always be on the look-out for such summaries, for they will greatly assist him in his work. They will not relieve him of the task of investigating the events for himself, but they will give him a guide for his exploration and enable him to see what people much nearer in time to the events thought about them and the connection between them.

Thus in the modern period of British history the volumes of the *Annual Register* which have been published in an unbroken series each year since the middle of the eighteenth century should always be consulted early in the research. The files of newspapers, too, will almost always repay search, and especially the file of *The Times*, the great London newspaper that began publication in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. These files have been indexed and reference to them is therefore comparatively simple. To consult the *London Gazette*, the official organ of the British government, is somewhat more difficult, but it is usually worth while as giving dated information as to Orders in Council, official appointments and so forth which will provide a stable structure round which the chronology of the subject may be built.

The student should always take great pains to study the careers of the principal actors in the



events with which he is dealing. If they were persons of importance in British life, their biographies have usually been summarised in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and bibliographical data will be found attached which will enable further details about them to be ascertained. Genealogical enquiry will sometimes repay the time spent upon it, for it may be very revealing to find that some of the persons dealt with were linked together by ties of family, kinship or marriage. Such enquiries will carry the student into the mazes of Burke's *Peerage*, *Baronetage* or *Landed Gentry*, Debrett's *Peerage*, G. E. C.'s *Complete Peerage*, the *Visitations* of the kings-at-arms that are published in the volumes of the Harleian Society and so on. Old handbooks of official personages and books of dignities may repay search, and it may even be worth while to investigate the files of wills at Somerset House or other probate registries, but too much time must not be spent on enquiries such as these, for the mere accumulation of detailed information may overload one's note-books without yielding anything of importance for the subject in hand. The student must never forget his theme, and that he is attempting to learn the history of his subject and not to pile up facts.

As the student works up the background of his period in the writings of some popular historian, he will probably find very little mention of most of the men whose letters and memoranda he constantly meets with in his search for materials. They and their work seem to be overlooked and most of the



credit for the actions of their time seems to be attributed to one or two well-known historical personages whose characters and achievements are discussed at length. But as in everyday life we know that much of what is nominally done by a leader is really the work of his coadjutors, so the student, as he gets more familiar with his period, comes to know the secondary personalities and to realise what a large share they had in making history. The whole thing becomes more impersonal and more many-sided, and though it is possible that when he comes to write, he may be tempted to seek light and shade for his narrative by focussing attention on the principal actors, in his investigations he will probably find it more profitable to pursue more closely the careers of the lesser known men and to try to understand their work and motives. This will give depth and detail to his mental picture of the time; it will make him realise more fully that history is no mere theatrical drama as some sensational popular writers depict it. It has no straightforward plot worked out in the full-blooded rivalries of heroes and villains before a background of unimportant supers, but is a far more complicated and less sensational affair. What will strike the budding investigator is not any decision of purpose but rather the vague opportunism on the part of everyone concerned, and their inability to see clearly whither their actions would lead them or how best to extricate themselves from the confused struggles of their times. History as it presents itself to the research-



er differs greatly from the history of the dramatist and the writer of historical novels because it is so like to the muddling through that he is familiar with in the pages of the newspapers that chronicle the doings of his own time. The student will often be tempted to despair of straightening things out of the muddle. Only when he comes to realise that historical forces are usually independent of the wishes of those who work them out and move forward irresistibly, does he recover from his disillusionment and begin to find a deeper interest in what he is doing.

It is hardly possible to give hints of value as to the practical way of handling the historical materials that are found, for every student will have his own ways of setting to work. A few suggestions may, however, be of some value. It is not well to make too many notes in the first instance. I have found it convenient when handling a volume of MSS. in the P.R.O. to make, first of all, a rapid perusal of the documents contained within it without taking any notes of its contents save the numbers of the items that seem likely to contain matter of direct interest to the subject in hand. When my first perusal is over, I turn back and work in detail through the documents noted, giving a second glance at those I have rejected as I turn over their pages. In extracting my notes I copy out the passages I require in the words of the writer. I modernise all the spelling and use modern systems of capitalisation and punctuation unless there are



valid reasons to follow the document more faithfully. Unimportant passages are briefly summarised in my own words, so as to give a clear idea of the document as a whole. It is almost certain to lead to difficulty to attempt to paraphrase important passages, for this inevitably introduces ambiguity and will necessitate further reference when the passages come to be woven into the historical structure. Particular care must be devoted to attaching proper references in order to shew the source of each extract made, for nothing is more exasperating than to find when one comes to utilise a piece of information that its source cannot be identified.

At the end of each day's work it is well to file the notes that have been taken, and to fit them into some system of indexing. Some students like to make each separate note upon cards of a standard size and to use an elaborate card file with cross references. For my part, I have never found this system congenial, for it involves undue elaboration and mechanical sorting. I prefer to keep a note of what I have been handling in its proper place upon my chronology, which then affords at any moment a conspectus of the work that has been done. As I go on, I can thus see where I have amassed a considerable quantity of information, and where I have little or none, but in the main I trust for this to my memory and let the subject shape itself there. The accumulation of data is comparatively easy, but this by itself gives us no history. It is the utilisation of the data and their assembly round the theme



that is the real task of importance and here comes the conversion of the student from a mere record-searcher into a budding historian.

It is not advisable in the earlier stages of the work to devote too much attention to minutiae. As the material is gathered it is, of course, necessary to collect as much evidence as the documents contain concerning the subject in hand in order to avoid having to consult them again, but the student should not be tempted at first to turn away and collect the collateral evidence that will be needed to clear up the various points that arise. Such a course would involve a scattering of effort and probably a considerable waste of time. The main theme should always be kept in mind and it is permissible to form a general working hypothesis as to its general lines of development. There ought to be no hesitation in varying this hypothesis as the subject grows and shapes itself. The student will find as he goes on that his subject seems to take hold of him and to begin shaping itself independently of his volition. If he holds fast to his preconceived notions and endeavours to force the facts to fit them, he will land himself into difficulties. He must keep an open and adaptable mind, and if he does so, he will find the facts falling into line. Bit by bit, he will perceive a chain of cause and effect appearing, and as it lengthens he will come to see how many things that at first he passed over, have a relation to the chain and how they gradually fill out and round off the main idea.



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The whole subject will be too large to keep in view all through, it must be divided into its natural divisions. If these cannot be discovered, artificial divisions must be created for working purposes; possibly chronological, though here the divisions should not be too narrow, possibly geographical, possibly in connection with two or three of the principal personalities concerned. Whenever natural divisions of the subject appear, these should replace the artificial divisions in which the work began. Each of these divisions should be treated as though they formed separate subjects, and the work in each should be carried a long way forward, before attention is turned to the next division. It is not always advisable to start collecting material only about the rudimentary beginnings of the subject. This must be done, at some time, of course, and the exploration carried back to the root causes of the movement that is being studied. But such work may be very difficult, and it is often best to collect the available material for a time when the movement was clearly marked, and to leave its earliest period until greater experience has been gained.

It may be that when the subject has really begun to shape itself, the root causes will be seen to begin much further back in time than was originally suspected. But the student must not lose his sense of proportion and be tempted like some bygone historians to begin his work with the Creation or the Ancient Britons. He must confine himself to his chosen theme and the really proximate causes



of the movement he is studying. Even when he does this, he may find that he is carried into a much earlier period than seemed likely. This will charge the balance of his work, and with only a limited time at his disposal he may be compelled to handle only a part of what he originally planned. If this can be justified on serious historical grounds, he will find that no objection is offered by the director of his studies. What he is doing must be done well, and it may be that what he at first thought was a subject that could easily be cleared up in his prentice stage, will afford him the work of years. Everything depends upon the nature of his theme and his success in discovering material to illustrate it. Where he at first thought that he would only have fragmentary information, he may be lucky enough by his patience and skill to discover unexpected stores. The essential thing, as I have so often emphasised before, is to confine detailed work to things that really matter and not to get bogged in mazes of petty facts each of which may be interesting enough in itself but be of little or no significance in relation to the history he is trying to elucidate.

As each part of the work is finished off and the evidence sorted out and authenticated, the main lines of the whole subject will begin to stand out clearly. It will shape itself in the student's mind and he will by degrees come to see how its various members are articulated. The disconnected facts if they have been properly selected are turning into history by an almost unconscious process, and long



before the investigator comes to throw his results into their final written form, he ought to have a clear conception of what that form ought to be. He will find it of great advantage to discuss this growing conception with his fellow-students in the seminar and with the director of his studies, for it is in such discussion that he will find the weak points in his arguments. He will note where others find obscurities and fail to see the connection at points where he, immersed in his subject as he has been, thought that he was fully secure from attack. It is much better to establish the historical argument to the satisfaction of friendly fellow-enquirers who look at the history itself rather than the mere surface accidents of its literary presentation, as the reviewers may do. The task of accomplishing that presentation is quite different from that of shaping the history and we have now only to turn to that final stage.

But before we begin to consider it, we may appropriately say a word or two about what is, I think, an almost unique experiment in the University of London to assist the directors of seminars and the students who work under them. I have already mentioned the Institute of Historical Research incidentally, and it may be of interest if I say something of its arrangements in more detail. Its conception was due in the main to Professor A. F. Pollard, its present Director, and Miss E. Jeffries Davis, its first Librarian, who have had the leading share in guiding its policy. The ordinary work of



training undergraduates for the first degree in History in the University of London is carried on in the classes of the various colleges, for as the number of students is large, the classes in the obligatory subjects must necessarily be duplicated. The specialised part of the undergraduate work, however, is largely inter-collegiate and students move about from one college to another to take the lectures and classes of those teachers who specialise in their subject. At the post-graduate stage the work becomes wholly inter-collegiate and our seminars and technical classes are assembled in one building, the Institute of Historical Research which is closely contiguous to the Library of the British Museum and not far from the MSS. collections in the Public Record Office. The position is important, for it makes access from our places of research to our rendezvous for discussion convenient and rapid.

During the earlier part of the day while the P.R.O. and the Museum are open, the Institute is comparatively quiet, but after 5 o'clock when most of the seminars begin their meetings, it is thronged with the scholars and students who are admitted by the Committee to its use. Even on public holidays the Institute is busy, for visiting scholars who have only a short time in London want to make use of every minute and ours is the only collection of historical material which is hardly ever closed. Each seminar meets in a room provided with the collections of printed documentary material relating to its subject and with neces-



sary apparatus in books, maps, facsimiles, etc. Throughout the whole Institute material is generally divided according to subject, and there is, of course, complete open access to the shelves. This is of great importance, for to browse through a mass of books of common subject is perhaps as stimulating a practice for the student as could be devised. Men are encouraged to roam through the collections anywhere and everywhere and the whole atmosphere is one of enquiry. To quote a few examples of the method of arrangement, we may say that in the English room there are the Calendars of Patent Rolls and State Papers, etc., the Journals of the Lords and Commons, Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, the Collections of the Royal Historical, Selden, Parker, Surtees and other document-printing societies, and so on, in which the printed materials for English history are collected. The Colonial room contains practically all the similar printed materials for the history of the Colonies and Dominions, and the American room much for the United States. These are surrounded by various smaller rooms where are assembled the printed materials for naval and military history, legal history, the history of London, etc. In each of them a particular seminar meets periodically for its colloquium, with its books of reference at hand, and in some of them two or more seminars dealing with allied subjects meet at different periods each week. Works for common reference like the *Dictionary of National Biography*, the *Oxford English Dictionary*, bibliographies, the



catalogues of the great libraries, Parliamentary Papers and the like are placed in contiguous corridors to which common access is easy.

The seminar rooms for European history are grouped round a large library containing collections common to many countries. Such volumes as those of the *British and Foreign State Papers*, *Die Grosse Politik*, Martens' *Recueil des Traités*, Dumont, Hertzslet and so on are to be found there, but the collections for particular countries are kept each in its appropriate seminar room. Thus there is a room devoted to the history of France, another for Dutch history, another for Czecho-Slovakia, etc., and in these rooms with the assistance of the governments of those countries fairly complete collections of their printed historical materials have been assembled. The collections for the history of India since the sixteenth century are associated with those of the Dominions, but Oriental history as such is not provided for. The University's collections for that subject are concentrated in the Library of the School of Oriental Studies which is arranged on a similar plan. This is accessible to the readers at the Institute and so an uneconomical duplication of material is avoided.

Besides the seminar rooms proper there are other rooms devoted to special technical purpose and each containing its appropriate apparatus. The Palaeography room has large collections of facsimiles of MSS., catalogues of all the facsimiles in London and elsewhere in England, authenticated



facsimiles of handwritings, and so on. The central editorial office of the *Victoria History of the Counties of England* is near to the English room, and the editorial office of *History*, the quarterly journal of the Historical Association, is also in the building. Files of the great historical journals and the principal reviews, files of the *Times* and other newspapers both English and foreign are accessible in the corridors and are continually being increased. Although the Institute purchases comparatively little and makes a rigid selection of the materials offered to it according to their usefulness to its direct purpose, the whole collection grows steadily and there is constant pressure upon its shelves. It is not and need not be a compendious library of historical books, for, with the unrivalled collections of the British Museum at its doors, and the good collections of the University and College libraries, it would be wasteful of space and labour to try to duplicate them. The Institute is a tool for the training of historical investigators and a means of assisting the work of historical scholars, and all its arrangements are designed to further those purposes.

The Institute has no teaching staff, and besides its Secretary-Librarian who is a trained historian, its only administrative staff consists of a clerk or two. The Director is a distinguished University professor whose reputation confers dignity upon the post; the work of the library is done by part-time research students who spend most of their time



in investigation and are regular members of the seminars. The directors of seminars are teachers of the University and belong as all our teachers in London do to their colleges. There they carry on their under-graduate teaching, and only towards the end of the day do they move across to the Institute to do their post-graduate work. Everyone of them is himself contributing by his publications to the advancement of historical knowledge and his reputation in the University depends to a considerable extent upon the value of those contributions. Thus everyone in the Institute is upon a common footing. Some have great experience and a well-known name; some are beginners, but all are marked with a zest for scholarship, and that, I think, is what most of our visitors find the most congenial feature within our walls. No one benefits in purse or reputation by working in the Institute, but each aspires to add something to the standing of the whole by the researches that he carries on while he belongs to its team.

VI. THE PRESENTATION OF RESULTS. THE FINISHED MONOGRAPH.

“Imagination is the highest of historical endowments,” writes Professor Ernest Scott, “because it enables the breath of life to animate the dry



bones." Every historian must to some extent do his own delving, because only thus can he see the facts in the crude ore, recognise their essential relevancy, and be aware of the nature of the material wherein they were embedded.* But to learn how to use the imagination properly, it must be trained and guided, for without the discipline of scientific thought it is a peril and delusion. We have already spoken at length about the way in which this discipline may be imparted in the seminar and historical imagination exercised to extract relevant materials from the records and to think out the history that links them together. But when this has been done, there still remains one of the most difficult tasks of all,—to present the results in a form in which they will attract attention and excite interest. This task demands the use of the art of history, and here the training must take on a widely different character. Both the reason and the critical and selective powers must be cultivated and employed, but in addition there must be artistic and literary senses. Language, style and form must be studied and natural taste improved, to yield a pleasing and satisfactory production. Its arguments must be sound and its evidence good, but they will lose much of their value unless presented so as to excite and hold the interest of the reader.

Hundreds of pages have been written by great historians and literary critics about the practice of

* Scott, E., *History and Historical Problems*, p. 182.



the art of historical writing, and I need not, if I could, add anything to their general counsels and conclusions. In pursuit of my severely practical aim of shewing what I have found useful to guide the students in my seminar, I will confine myself here to a few hints on the more mechanical side. If the student desires to help himself to know more of the broader canons of the historical art he must read such books as Benedetto Croce's essay "On History," Macaulay's article on "Greek, Roman and Modern Historians" (1828), Dr. Gooch's *History and Historians of the 19th Century* or any of the numerous authorities cited by Prof. Scott in the article which was quoted above. I fear that their reading may leave in the student's mind a feeling of despair of ever being able to reach the lofty heights to which they point; sometimes it seems as though they esteem only the writings of the greatest literary artists as being worthy of the name of 'history' at all, but clearly this is such a counsel of perfection that it releases the humbler practitioner of the art to aim at some nearer goal.

What may we take as this nearer goal and how can the ordinary, diligent student of history get near to it? In my opinion if he can describe clearly to his readers why he has selected his special subject for research, where the movements affecting it began, how they proceeded and whither they led, and lastly what bearing those movements had upon the general history of the time, he will have done something worth while. He will not have



written a great history, but he will have done a workmanlike bit of work on the scale that he is attempting. We may roughly classify original historical writings into three :—

(a) *General histories*, dealing in broad sweeps with considerable periods of time. These can only be satisfactorily undertaken by writers of wide experience and a deep knowledge of what has previously been written about the period.

(b) *Treatises*, dealing with the special topics or periods in a detailed and comprehensive way. Their writers must be familiar with all the researches that have been done upon the chosen topic, and taking their results must weave them into a comprehensive whole. It is they who bring new knowledge into its proper position in history and it will be their pages in all probability that the writers of text-books and historical manuals will plunder with their scissors and paste-pots.

(c) *Monographs*, dealing each with one narrowly delimited topic or period, and giving full evidence from the original materials for the conclusions presented. It is in this form of historical writing that the student must make his first attempts, and to it, therefore, we will confine our attention.

The essential point about a monograph is, as its name indicates, that it deals with one subject only, but by custom it is implied that it deals with



that subject intensively and exhaustively. A minor subject may be fully dealt with in an *article*, or a wider one treated extensively in an *essay*. Neither of these forms seems to me to fall within the monograph class, for each is too slight. I usually advise my students that to treat adequately a subject that is sufficiently wide to be a suitable one for post-graduate training their resulting monograph will require at least 40,000 to 50,000 words. It is of a monograph upon this scale that I will therefore speak, and I will confine myself to its form and contents.

One or two general counsels, however, may not be inappropriate. If the student wants detailed guidance on matters of language and the niceties of style, he can gain it from handbooks on English Composition. To a large extent the power of expressing one's self really well comes only by practice and is a matter of taste, but from the beginning the student can determine to write clearly and to the point. He should make his sentences short and confine each sentence to the expression of a single idea. Each should have a clear grammatical subject and predicate, and long and complicated subordinate clauses should be avoided. The student should make sure that each sentence achieves what it sets out to do, to express its idea completely and without ambiguity. If he is in doubt whether this has been achieved, he should try the effect upon the fellow members of his seminar and make sure that he is conveying to them exactly what he means to



express. Just as a sentence ought to be confined to the expression of a single idea, so a paragraph ought to be limited to a single set of connected ideas. When a new set of ideas is entered upon, a new paragraph should be begun, and similarly when an entirely new subject is opened there should be a fresh chapter. Each sentence or paragraph should lead naturally on to the next, and abrupt and disconnected transitions of idea should be rigorously avoided.

The same canons that govern the arrangements of sentences and paragraphs should on a wider scale control the plan of the monograph as a whole. It should have a logically conceived beginning, middle and end—a statement that seems trite but which contains within it an important truth that is far too often neglected. Too many students' theses are shapeless conglomerations of facts that seem wrapped in foggy uncertainty as to the purpose of their compiling. Again and again the unfortunate examiners who are alone compelled to read them have wondered when they come to the last page whether they have not mislaid a portion of the sheets, for there seems no particular reason why the thesis should end where it does or why the last chapter read should be the last of the stream of uninspired facts through which they have been wading.

A monograph may begin in numberless ways, but only one way of ending it is generally desirable. The logical way is to consider it as a prolonged



argument and to arrange its structure like that of a proposition of Euclid. Or we may conceive it like a well-constructed play which, having developed its problems and the movements of its characters through various scenes, brings them at the final curtain to a symmetrical close with the problems solved and the movements merged into a harmonious whole. Perhaps the former pattern is the easier to follow and more suited to the expression of scientific results. The Introduction may set forth the main problem that is to be dealt with, shew reasons why it is undertaken, its connection with the main course of historical development and the work done by other investigators in the field. The conclusion may then recapitulate the problem, summarise the results derived from the evidence considered in each part of the argument and link those results together into a whole. Different forms of conclusion may suit different subjects, but the general impression left upon the reader's mind ought always to be the same. Whether he agrees with the conclusion that has been reached or whether he does not, he ought to feel that the writer of the monograph knew what he was driving at and that he has finished it off in a way that may be summed up in the traditional phrase *Quod erat demonstrandum*.

Many historical subjects must be placed in their proper setting before they can be satisfactorily expounded. This setting may either be geographical or institutional, but it will always also be historical. On this last point we have insisted throughout, and



I need not further develop it. Classical examples of the geographical introduction may be cited from Caesar's *De Bello Gallico* and Vidal Lablache's fine introductory chapter to Ernest Lavisse's *Histoire de France*, and young writers may be recommended to study such examples before they begin the writing of their monographs. Such a method of opening a subject is traditional, but it would obviously be unsuitable when the subject is institutional in character and set in a field where geographical factors have little or no influence. In such a case the geographical introduction may be replaced by a rapid survey of the history of the institution from which the specialised subject of enquiry sprang, and the way in which it performed its more generalised functions. This naturally leads on to an emphasis upon those parts of the institution that were differentiated to perform the special work into which investigation is being made, and their study in greater detail from their early beginnings leads insensibly into the body of the subject.

I cannot profitably add much to what is said about the general treatment of the subject and the utilisation of material in Langlois' and Crump's books which I mentioned earlier. There the authors discuss the nature of historical evidence with pertinent examples, and some of them may afford valuable suggestions to the student. In all probability in his prentice work he will not be faced with the nicer problems of historical scholarship or have to decide questions as to the authenticity of docu-



ments or the veracity of witnesses. His task will probably be more straightforward, and it is well that it should be so, for it is best to learn how to deal competently with the ordinary everyday problems of history before attempting to tackle difficult points of refined scholarship. The historian of the more recent periods with his ample evidential material meets with fewer such points than his fellow-worker in the ancient or early medieval period where material is scanty and its interpretation difficult.

The solution of a historical problem is really a process of gradual enlightenment by bringing into relation chains of cause and effect. But when the student has formed a clear conception in his mind of the whole chain and its links, he still has to face the difficult task of getting that conception down upon paper so that others may grasp it. He will probably do this best if he tackles it piecemeal. Let him consider each chapter as a separate problem which must be cleared up before he goes on to the next. He has had a working hypothesis by which to bring causes and effects into relation, and if this has been satisfactorily accomplished, the hypothesis becomes probable enough to be made the thesis of the chapter. To impart conviction of its truth to the reader it must be supported by evidence, and here comes the really essential part of preparing one's results for presentation. How much or how little evidence must be adduced to establish the necessary conviction in the mind of the skilled



reader? It will vary in every case ; sometimes much will be required and sometimes little, and only one piece of counsel can be given. Aim at an economy of evidence. Let there be an ample sufficiency to prove the point, but avoid a wearisome piling up and repetition of evidence which will merely surfeit the reader.

The sources of the evidence adduced must always be indicated with great care, but here again the writer must preserve a sense of proportion and steer a middle course. The ordinary facts of history may be taken for granted, for the reader will not need a reference to convince him that Queen Elizabeth came to the throne in 1558 or that Palmerston was a celebrated Prime Minister under Queen Victoria. References should be inserted with discretion and usually confined to significant or unusual points. Footnotes should as a rule be confined to references or verbal explanations and all material arguments confined to the text. If there is any point of real importance that cannot appropriately be cleared up in the text, it should be relegated to a general note appended to the chapter, or, if it deals with matters arising in several chapters, to an appendix attached to the whole monograph.

Where quotations have to be made in the course of the argument, they should be included in the text in inverted commas and be textually exact. If any words of the original document are omitted



the omission must be indicated by the insertion of dots (.....); if anything is inserted or altered the words must be shewn between square brackets ([]). Where a quotation is needed as evidence but cannot be appropriately included in the text, there is no objection to adding it as foot-note between inverted commas. In some cases if there are unprinted or inaccessible documents of much illustrative importance to the theme, they or parts of them may be printed *in extenso* in the appendices. The essential criterion to govern the inclusion of anything in the monograph or its annexures is that it shall be of evidential value for the subject in hand.

Just as it is necessary to see that every paragraph leads naturally on to the next and that there are no digressions save for a clear and understandable purpose, so each chapter must be designed to derive without an abrupt transition from what has gone before. The interest of a monograph is more technical and scientific than that of an essay, and it must arise naturally from a clear and logical treatment that appeals to the reason. Some kinds of historical writing may legitimately and effectively use the devices of drama and graphic narration to heighten their appeal, but this kind of thing to me seems out of place in monograph work. That ought to keep a very cool and impartial tone, but it need not be dull. If the writer uses clear and simple language without resort to artifice, his work ought to be interesting in itself and to leave on the read-



er's mind an attractive impression of restrained competence.

I doubt whether the director of any seminar would claim to be able to train his pupils to become writers of first-rate history. That faculty depends upon the possession of an innate sense of literary style. It is only upon the mechanical side of the presentation of results that he can hope to bring all his pupils up to a common standard. He can insist upon the arrangement of all monographs prepared under his direction upon a common customary form which will make them far more presentable than are many of the ill-arranged theses submitted by university candidates. This form is familiar to all practised readers, but we may enumerate its various parts with a few remarks:— They are in order as follows:—(1) *Title-page*, (2) *Preface or prefatory note*. This should be brief and solely concerned with points about the production of the monograph. The common mistake of overburdening the preface with acknowledgments of minor assistance should be avoided. (3) *Table of Contents*. This may consist either of chapter titles only or of analytical subject lists of the contents of each chapter. These must not be unduly lengthened. (4) The main body of the monograph, divided into chapters. Keep these of approximately the same length. Five or six thousand words is a convenient one, but the essential point to care for is that the divisions between the chapters shall come naturally according to their subjects, and this will



necessarily involve some variation. (5) *Appendices*, if any, including illustrative documents. Do not include anything unless it is of real importance for the subject in hand. (6) *Bibliography*. To this I will refer again in a moment. (7) *Index*. This should be on a scale commensurate with the work. Include all material references to persons and places, but not mere casual mentions of them. It will add greatly to the value of the index if the principal subjects dealt with are carefully indexed to shew the development of each in the monograph. Persons should be indexed under their surnames with cross-references to their titles. The plan employed in the *Dictionary of National Biography* should be closely imitated. References in footnotes are as a rule not indexed.

The production of the book in MS. or type-written form for submission to an examiner or publisher is of course the first stage in its progress and its production in printed form involves much additional practical detail, but into this we cannot here enter. Some of the great publishers and notably the Cambridge University Press and Messrs. Macmillan & Co. issue handbooks to guide authors in such matters, and to them the student may be referred.

Of all the accessory matter attached to the monograph the bibliography is by far the most important, for if it is properly prepared it reveals to his fellow scholars the nature of the material the student has used for his work and something of his



capacity for handling it. The bibliography may either be a mere list of titles or a more valuable descriptive and explanatory catalogue. The items should be divided under headings thus, the fact of whether each is printed or in MS. being indicated, but the place of the item being solely dictated by the nature of the material it contains :—

1. *Bibliographies.*

2. *Original authorities.*

(a) General collections of MSS. (whether printed or unprinted).

A full description of each collection should be given in such a way as to facilitate the access to it of any scholar desiring to pursue further any clues given in the monograph.

(b) Other documentary materials.

3. *Contemporary or nearly contemporary authorities.*

These will mainly be published works. Each entry should be given in the standard form employed in the *Catalogue of the London Library* or the *Catalogue of Printed Books in the British Museum*. These give the following information in order :— Surname of author ; initials or first names ; short title of the book ; place of publication ; date of publication ; number of volumes. In most cases it will



be well to give a short note of the relation of the book to the subject of research. No titles ought to be inserted in the bibliography unless the book has actually been used in the course of the research. The bibliography is a select list of the works consulted and not a mere library catalogue.

4. *Secondary authorities* of contemporary or nearly contemporary date.

5. Works of more recent date.

In some cases it will be of assistance to the reader to include a short summary of the chronology prepared by the student in the preparation of his work, but this should only be given when it is of direct assistance to the understanding of the results set forth in the monograph.

With the completion of his monograph and its crystallisation into unchanging form at the hands of the typist the student feels that the first child of his brain has left home and gone out to meet the buffets of the world. If he is an independent investigator nothing remains but to engage in the weary task of finding a publisher and waiting for the verdict of the reviewers of his book, if there are any. But the ordinary worker in the seminar is sooner put out of his misery, for he is usually a candidate for a higher degree, and his examiners at least are compelled to read his work and pass judgment upon it. The methods of different universities in the examination of post-graduate work



vary, but a few words as to the practice in history of the University of London may not be out of place as an illustration.

There are two research degrees of the University in the Faculty of Arts, the M.A. and the Ph.D., the second of which is of a higher standard and involves at least two years of full-time work in the seminars of the university. The methods of examination in both are the same, though the M.A. requires the candidate to answer a satisfactory written examination in the background of his subject and this is not always required for the Ph.D. where the thesis must be of more distinct originality. In each case a special Board is appointed to examine each candidate. The Board is composed of the teacher of the candidate, an external expert who is chosen for his knowledge of the field of research in which the monograph lies, and a second teacher of the University of London who works in an allied field. Four printed or type-written copies of the thesis are presented, and these are circulated to the examiners. After reading them the examiners decide whether the candidate shall be rejected forthwith on the grounds of lack of originality, incompetence of treatment or lack of skill in presentation. If they decide to examine the candidate further, he is summoned to appear before them for *viva voce* examination and this really means that he has to acquit himself satisfactorily in a disputation before experts on his subject much as the candidates in a medieval university had to do. The ordeal is a



severe one for those who are not accustomed to such disputations, but to the candidate who has faced weekly the fierce criticisms of his fellows in the seminar it will not offer many new terrors. He will welcome the opportunity of holding his own before masters of the subject and of learning from them if he can the defects in his arguments and methods of presentation. We do not insist in London on having the thesis printed before presentation, but the examiners who recommend a candidate for the degree must give evidence in his favour as to originality, etc., and among that evidence must be a statement that the thesis is presented in appropriate literary form and that, if unpublished, it is in a form suitable for publication. Both these requirements have a very real meaning, and candidates often are unable to satisfy them and are referred for six months to amend their omissions. When the degree has been granted, a summary of the thesis is prepared by the candidate who has worked in the Institute and published in its *Bulletin*. To that source I may recommend those who are desirous of seeing the kind of work that we turn out in the system of training that I have here outlined.

CONCLUSION

Our rapid survey of the points to which attention may profitably be directed in the training of students in a historical seminar has necessarily been



somewhat disconnected and a mere enumeration of practical devices rather than a theoretical enunciation of unalterable rules. The advantage of the seminar method is its flexibility and constant power of adaptation to suit the requirements of the students composing the seminar at any one time. The inspiration derived from contact with others working in allied fields relieves the student from a painful sense of isolation. If he has the right spirit and any real capacity for historical research, he will feel himself to be a member of a team of investigators all pushing along a common road into the unknown. He will learn to give and take, to help others wherever he can and to care more for the advancement of his subject than for his own personal credit. He will come to take a greater pride in the accomplishments of his team than in his own little discoveries, and thus the seminar, if it is doing its proper work, will contribute new disciplined recruits to the ranks of the scholars who are gradually tracing out the development of the social organism and thus adding real, impartial and soundly based knowledge to the history of mankind.



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